THE LIMITS OF CRITICISM, By Howard Mumford Jones

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The Saturday Review of Literature

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By Denis Mackail
Reviewed by R. Ellis Roberts

"THE MEN AROUND CHURCHILL"
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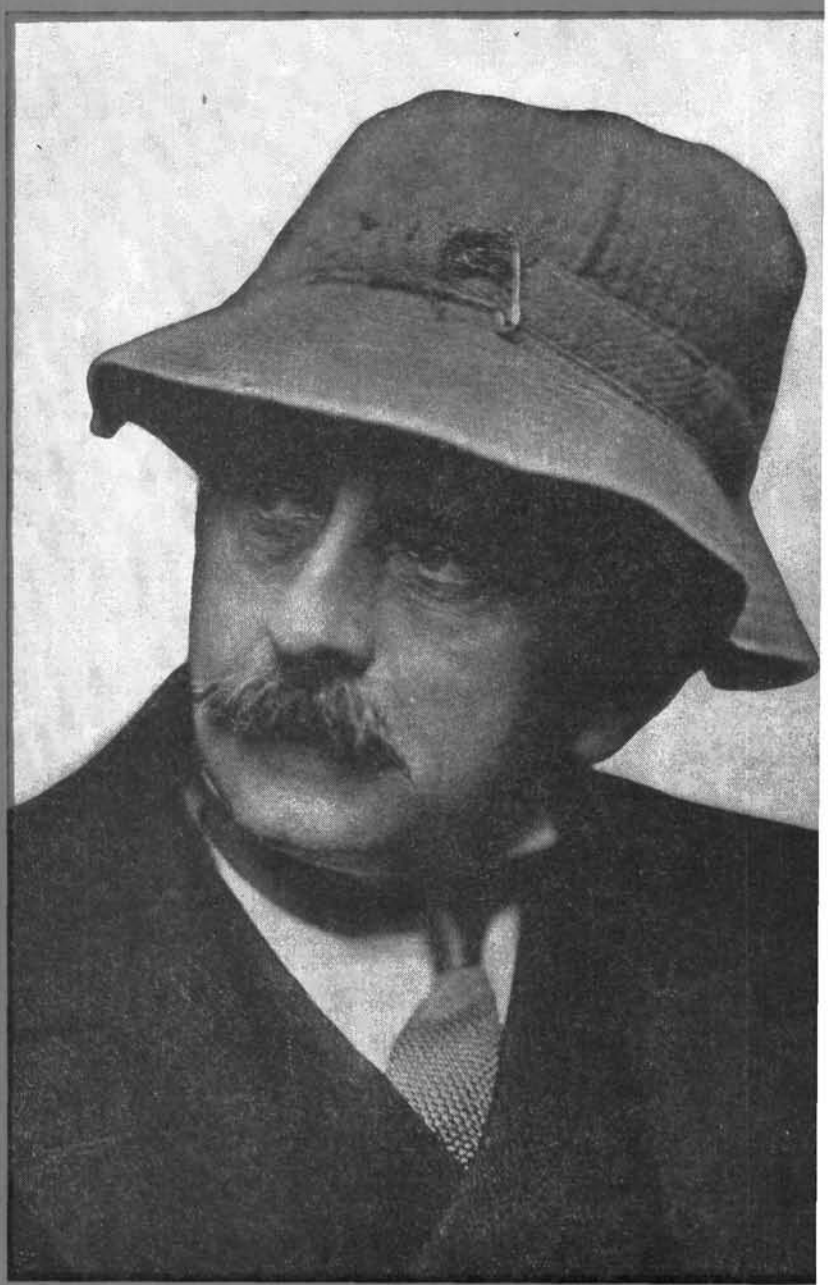

J. M. BARRIE, whose biography by Denis Mackail is reviewed this week, "relied all his life on a charm so miraculous" that Mr. Roberts can find "no parallel to it" . . . *(See page 5)*

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The Saturday Review of Literature

The Limits of Contemporary Criticism

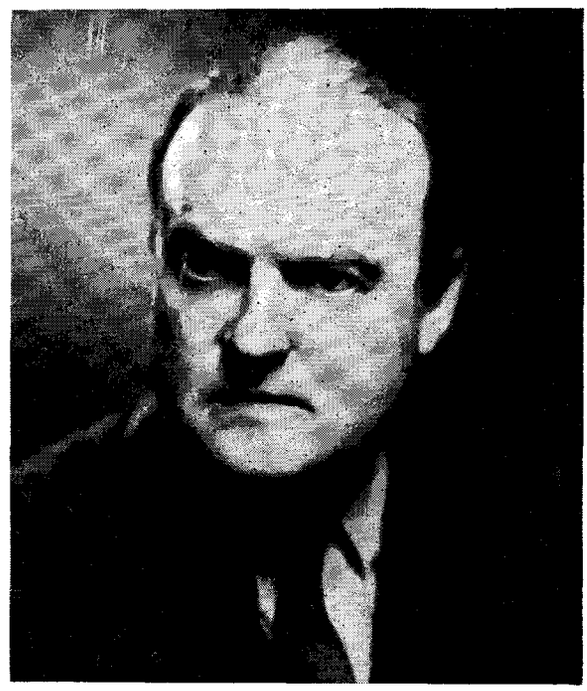
HOWARD MUMFORD JONES

ALTHOUGH the last quarter of a century has seen the writing of a rich and varied library of essays about literature and literary methods, it is astonishing how little of what passes for literary criticism in the United States has to do with literature itself. Our critics tend to polarize around two extremes. At the one end there has been a great deal written about the relations of literature to society, the most advanced manifestation of which has been the development of Marxian criticism in the United States. At the other end there have developed an attitude and a theory which have concerned the mechanisms of literature rather than literature itself—literature as metaphor, literature as psychological revelation, literature as meaning, even —and I do not refer to Mr. I. A. Richards—literature as the meaning of meaning.

Much of this writing has been valuable and some of it has been brilliant. Much of it also has been tendentious, and a good deal of it seems to me to represent motion without progress. It is doubtless useful for a certain kind of literary technician to be made aware of unsuspected ambiguities lurking beneath the fair surface of the English language, but inasmuch as books are made for men, not men for books, the weakness of the introspective and analytical schools of criticism has been the disproportionate emphasis they have laid upon literary and linguistic technology. If we put the writings of, let us say, Mr. R. P. Blackmur alongside the prose and poetry of Carl Sandburg, we see at once that Mr. Blackmur dwells in what I may call a private world of his own, whereas Mr. Carl Sandburg dwells in a public world accessible to anyone who can read. I do not mean any disrespect to Mr. Blackmur or to others like him when I say that if the business of literature is to befriend those who would live in the spirit, as Arnold said, Mr. Sandburg is at the moment more useful than the *Kenyon Review*. And if the business of literature is not in this sense to be useful, literature is likely to degenerate into an elaborate private game played with infinite relish by a selected few, but a game without general significance to the United States.

On the other hand, it must be conceded that much literary criticism—say that of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries—had as its characteristic weakness the failure to recognize that the production and distribution of books are a social phenomenon. The artist, whether he admits it or not, writes for an audience and in so doing is influenced by the audience to which his writing is addressed. The author, though he may seem to shake off their influence, is the product in some measure of time and space, of society and solitude, of economic pressure and social prestige, and not to recognize these influences is not to interpret literature. But Marxian criticism (at least with us) has usually been more concerned with party correctness than with literary felicity; the Marxist critics have on the whole failed to maintain the generous breadth of Hazlitt, who, though he denounced the ideas of Burke, declared that the great conservative was one of the masters of English prose; and the relations of literature to society, the tentacles and filaments which unite genius to the social order are of a complexity and a delicacy far beyond the naive assumptions of Marxian literary theory.

The chief weakness of the lively writing about literature which has been done in the last two or three decades seems to me, at least, to be its failure to solve the philosophic problem. It has given us some brilliant explications of the literary process, whether from without or from within, but it has mainly failed to show why literature is an ethical good, or, if one prefers, what literature is good for. Possibly the sterile fanaticism of the American humanists drove better minds away from the problem of relating the beautiful and the good, on the theory that goodness which destroyed beauty was not worth cultivating. Our critical writers, however, though they may quote Coleridge, do not see that the vitality of Coleridge has something to do with Coleridge's achievement in the realm of general ideas. They are too content with particular ideas, with ideas *ad hoc*. This can easily be shown. Suppose one were to make an anthology of those critical essays which have really altered the stream of literature—what American essays could one include? Who is the American equivalent of, let us say, Lessing or Renan? The name of Mr. T. S. Eliot



Edmund Wilson's "breadth of critical judgment sticks the more fiery off."

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at once occurs. As I do not wish here to argue whether Mr. Eliot is or is not a derivative rather than a primary mind, I will say only two things: first, in the American situation, the ideas of a royalist, a conservative, and a Catholic cannot truly help us who are trying to protect and defend democratic culture, and I point to Mr. Eliot's essay on a Christian society as evidence of the dangers lurking in Mr. Eliot's general view of things; and second, even if Mr. Eliot is as primary and original as Mr. Eliot's followers believe him to be, the ancient adage that one swallow does not make a summer is pertinent. Moreover, our problem is an American problem—a problem in American culture—and Mr. Eliot has long since ceased to interest himself in this phase of the relation of the beautiful and the good. The ideas of a man like the late E. A. Robinson, who did not pretend to be a literary theorist, are, it seems to me, more pertinent to the problem of American culture than the ideas of the author of "Essays Ancient and Modern."

Whether I am right about Mr. Eliot or whether I am wrong, it seems clear that we in this country have taken up literature as sociology or as technical achievement, but we have mostly abandoned literary criticism as philosophic truth, at least in the sense in which Lessing and Schiller and Coleridge are philosophic critics.

IT is illuminating in this connection to compare the critical writing of the last quarter of a century with the critical writing done in that much despised era, the period of the genteel tradition. I refer specifically to the critical essays of men like Stedman, Woodberry, Brander Matthews, Mabie, Higginson, and their contemporaries. At first glance the comparison seems idle. We tall fellows have force, range, variety, "sophistication," and a snappy style, whereas books like Stedman's "Victorian Poets" or Woodberry's "Heart of Man" essays have only the faded life of an old photograph. But Mr. Lewis Mumford in his "The Brown Decades" taught us, or should have taught us, how superficial our dismissal of the later nineteenth century has been; and it begins to occur to the impartial explorer of the critical literature written before World War I that, whatever their stylistic monotony or lack of intellectual vigor may have been, the critics of those earlier decades at least had the right aim in view. For them literature was an end in itself, not a means towards something else. Their weakness was flacidity, a superficial solution of a complex problem. But at least they looked upon literary art as autonomous. It is curious, even startling to list the contemporary critics who, in place of regarding literature as an autonomous realm of thought and spiritual activity, are not satisfied unless they can show that literature is a form of social action, an instrument of psychological release, an ingenious new language, or a complex cross-word puzzle something like those which appear weekly in *The Saturday Review of Literature*. The language and the units are "literary," but the process exists as a challenge to intellectual ingenuity.

The literary criticism of Mr. Edmund Wilson* has been done in a period when the critic has been subjected to enormous pressures designed to turn him away from the autonomy of literature to politics, sociology, psychology, or reform. Mr. Wilson has not always resisted these pressures, nor is it to be expected that he should do so. The book preceding "The Wound and the Bow" was, for example, a book about Marx, his contemporaries, and his followers. These pressures, moreover, have gone to the shaping of the present compilation and may account for the uneven merit of the seven essays contained in the volume. Nevertheless, Mr. Wilson seems to me to be a critic who has avoided more pitfalls than most have done, and he is, I think, the best balanced critic of our day.

Some of the essays in "The Wound and the Bow," to be sure, negate what I have just said. The essay on Casanova seems to me both dull and a makeweight. What is more astonishing, two others offend by their cavalier endings. Despite the importance which Mr. Wilson gives the later work of Dickens in the opening essay, he publishes a piece entitled "Justice to Edith Wharton," in which he blandly says he has read none of Mrs. Wharton's later novels (not even "Hudson River Bracketed!") and yet he flatly condemns everything about them. He publishes an essay on Hemingway in which "For Whom the Bell Tolls" is discussed as an after-thought in a penultimate paragraph. This is not good manners. The total production of these authors is supposed to be under responsible survey, and the public is entitled to Mr. Wilson's considered opinion. Finally, to my way of thinking, the essay on the "Philoctetes" of Sophocles (it is from this that the title of the volume comes) falls into the trap of modernism into which the brilliant Sir Gilbert Murray has led a good many commentators

**THE WOUND AND THE BOW: Seven Studies in Literature. By Edmund Wilson. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co. 1941. 296 pp. $3.*

(*Continued on page* 17)

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The Charm of J.M.B.

BARRIE: THE STORY OF J. M. B. By Denis Mackail. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1941. 736 *pp.* $3.75.

Reviewed by R. ELLIS ROBERTS

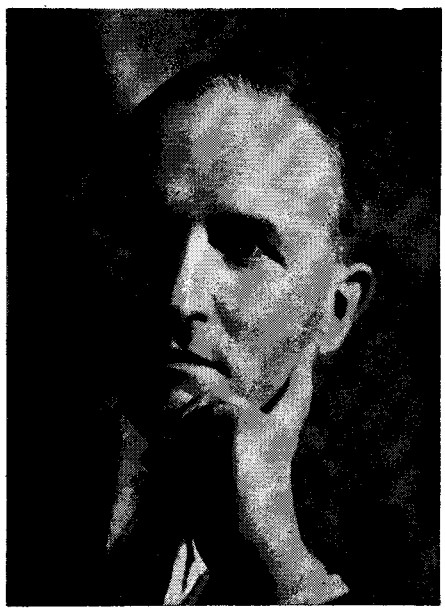
BARRIE was sixty-two years old. He was the most successful living British playwright; in the past he had been one of the most popular authors of novels, stories, sketches. He had innumerable and a few faithful friends. He owed more than nine-tenths of his fame and fortune to his own genius, industry, obstinacy, and charm. So much on one side. On the other his marriage had been shattered, after fifteen years, some twelve years earlier, and his pride was irreparably wounded; his greatest woman friend, the mother of the boys he adopted, had first seen her husband die in agony and had then, two years later, died too suddenly and painfully herself. One of these boys had been killed in the war, and then the best-loved Michael Davies, was drowned in the Thames while he was a student at Oxford.

That shock came near to unsettling Barrie's reason; only the devotion, the strength, and the wisdom of one woman, Cynthia Asquith, his friend and secretary, and the devotion of those few friends who loved him not in spite, but because of, his strange character, loved him in spite as well as because of his charm, gave him his balance again. A year after Michael's death, Barrie wrote in a book of notes dedicated to the boy, "It is as if long after writing 'Peter Pan' it's true meaning came to me. Desperate efforts to grow up but can't."

It would be hard at any time to write the biography of such a man. To write it now, when so many are alive whose susceptibilities might be wounded is doubly hard; harder, again, for a biographer who knew Barrie from his own childhood, and is a friend of some of the most important people concerned. To do this demands not only great skill, but a tact scarcely second to Barrie's own when he was giving comfort to the wounded or the aggrieved. Mr. Mackail has succeeded. And I say that, having started with some prejudice against the book. It is very long—over seven hundred pages of some four hundred words each. I disliked its opening, an etching, in the novelist's manner, of a night in the familiar rooms in Adelphi Terrace. And I had a suspicion at first that Mr. Mackail in certain moods and at certain moments, belonged to a class of critics who infuriate me by a lack of justice. As a person, as a writer, Barrie relied all his life on a charm so miraculous that I know no parallel to it. It was a charm like that magic sword which could behead a man so deftly that the victim never knew he had been touched, until he shook himself. To the charm of the man, to the charm of the author hundreds of thousands were victims. Then a few, friends of the man, devotees of the author, recovered from the spell and blamed Barrie because they had ever been under it. There are pages in which Mr. Mackail seems inclined to practise this injustice; but long before the book's end, he is free from that suspicion.

What a story he has to tell! A story of impudence, of courage, of pertinacity, of generosity, of friendship. So far as I can judge, he leaves little out. I wish he had told the story of Daniel O'Connor and the Peter Pan Book—how Barrie gave away a property in which any ordinary man with ordinary care could have found a living. But O'Connor was not an ordinary man.

It would be too much to say that Mr. Mackail succeeds in explaining Barrie's character. Perhaps only Barrie could do that, and he has left us an invaluable guide in "Sentimental Tommy." It is easy to say that he looked for a mother, his mother, in all women; and that even his admiration for his "heroes," George Meredith, Thomas Hardy, R. L. Stevenson, General Freyberg, Scott of the Antarctic, was the adoration of a child for a mother. That what he missed in his wife was a motherly feeling towards himself. But how then explain his paternal, avuncular, fraternal love for small boys, and more rarely little girls? Or his attachment, as natural and masculine as possible, to Gilmour, to Quiller-Couch, to Marriott-Watson, to Whibley?



Denis Mackail: "What a story he has to tell!"

In a brief review I can only throw out a suggestion. J. M. Barrie, bewitched by the theatre from his teens, was never quite sure that the stage was legitimate, could never cease dramatizing himself, and wavered, in horrid doubt, between the parts for which he cast himself, and that other self, which miscast, misdirected, and so often misrepresented him.

His Scotch blood, his religious background prevented him from ever being truly at home in the theatre: so he took the theatre home with him, and over and over again found his sincerest emotions, his deepest convictions spoiled by the lime-light, broken by self-consciousness. He was not Peter Pan. He was not the Boy who never grew up. He grew up: he could not find in his script any stage directions, any lines to express that abandonment of adolescence.

Before the Big Test

SHADOW OF WINGS. By Stella Morton. New York: Harper & Bros. 1941. 351 *pp.* $2.50.

Reviewed by REBECCA LOWRIE

THERE is a good deal of quiet charm and humor in this story of an English family in the year before the war. John Manners, a veteran of the last war, scants out a living for his wife and five children, writing mystery stories—the "big novel" postponed by the need of ready cash. Caro, his wife has dedicated her talent for the violin to the same ends. So when the story opens they are two grey, work-worn people, loving each other still, devoted to the children and as remote from them as they are from their own youth. Each child has a problem, and is a problem: Tony the eldest is in the R.A.F.; Judith is involved in a wretched love affair with a married man; Jason, the artist is cooped up in a bank; Virginia's marriage is losing its initial sheen, and Tim, the youngest, is a long-legged colt, acutely sensitive to the unrest of his brothers and sisters but inarticulate about it. Miss Morton brings all these people to life with understanding and skill. Not all of the problems are neatly solved, but one is left with the feeling that these are some of the English men and women who later on could stand up to a heroic test, because they met lesser tests with courage and intelligence.

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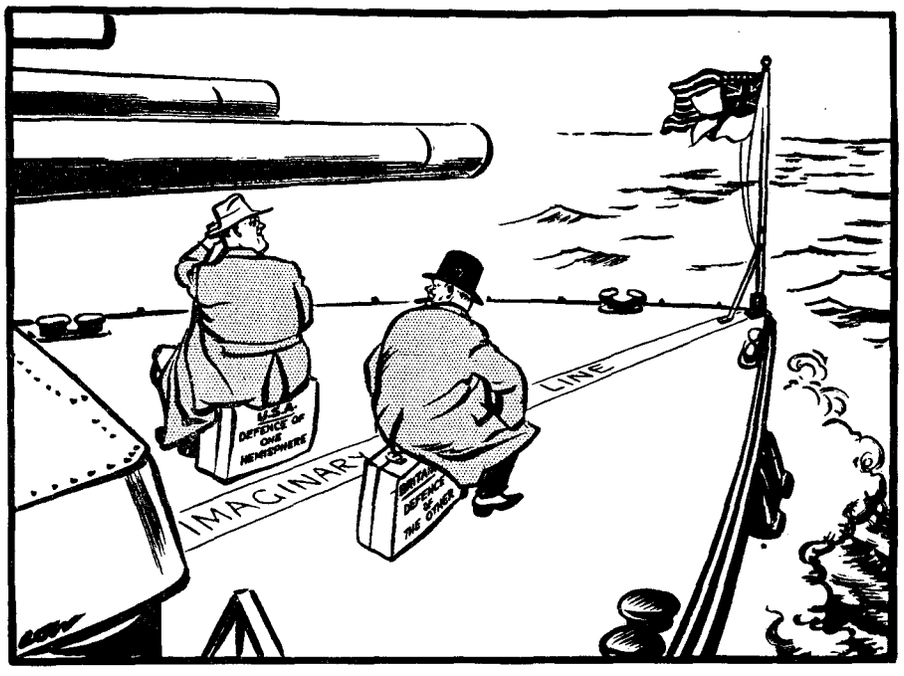

—"Going My Way," from "Low on the War."

This prophetic cartoon by Low was published almost one year to the day before the historic conference actually took place.

New Dimensions in Satire

LOW ON THE WAR. By David Low. New York: Simon & Schuster. 1941. 157 *pp.* $2.

Reviewed by ROLLIN KIRBY

DAVID LOW is the only fully equipped cartoonist in the world. There is Low and there are other cartoonists. I am not sure that he is not the best cartoonist who ever lived. The stately, pseudo-classic drawings of Tenniel, although they fitted admirably into the Victorian picture, had none of the pungency, the whistling satire, nor the superb technical élan of Low's drawings.

Not only are his ideas brilliant but the terse execution which never fumbles carries him through the difficult problems of presenting elaborate machinery (try, oh stumbling cartoonist, to achieve the synthesis of a mass of whirling machines as he does it), of animals in action, and, best of all, of genuine caricature. With what skill, almost Japanese in its surety and economy, does he reduce a likeness to a few strokes and dots!

In contrast to the ordered brevity of the drawings is the long and somewhat prolix introduction he has written for the new volume of his drawings called "Low on the War."

Only a man of extraordinary talents could achieve the complete freedom of expression he has attained. No other cartoonist in the world, I am sure could extract absolute carte-blanche from his publisher, even when their ideas clashed. Yet such an extraordinary publisher was, and is, Lord Beaverbrook. I know of no American newspaper owner who would stand for that.

Col. Blimp, that porcine, naked old Tory with a towel around his middle, that old laissez-faire, appeasing, respectable, disreputable, who appeared so often in Low's "Cartoon History of Our Times," published in 1939, has been swept out of the British pictures, liquidated by the inexorable drive of Hitler on the Continent and the resultant unity of the British public.

A prophetic cartoon in the present volume, dated August 26, 1940, appears on page 87 in which Roosevelt and Churchill are seen seated on the deck of a battleship flying the Union Jack and the Stars and Stripes. The coöperation between the two was the occasion of Great Britain ceding the ninety-nine year leases to bases in Newfoundland and the West Indies. Can it be that even cartoonists can occasionally be psychic?

To anyone whose head is not buried in the sands of isolation and to whom the kaleidoscope of world events is of urgent and terrifying interest, I recommend this volume. And if you are then unmoved by it I throw up my hands and say, "All right—here's Hitler—take him—he's yours!"

Rollin Kirby, one of America's foremost political cartoonists, is on the staff of the New York Post.

America in Transition

THE UNITED STATES IN WORLD AFFAIRS. An Account of American Foreign Relations, 1940. By Whitney H. Shepardson and William O. Scroggs. New York: Harper & Brothers for the Council on Foreign Relations. 1941. 400 *pp., index.* $3.50.

Reviewed by JAMES FREDERICK GREEN

THE year 1940 was a remarkable one in American history. It marked the transition between "neutrality" and "non-belligerency." After the fall of France our program of aid to Britain moved from low gear into high. Both the President who was elected for a third term and his rival walked a narrow tightrope, trying to secure the defeat of Hitler by methods short of war. And 1940 witnessed the first peacetime draft in American history, the trip of Sumner Welles to European capitals, the Ogdensburg agreement with Canada, the destroyers-for-bases deal, the Havana conference of the Western Hemisphere republics, and a dozen other events that have already been overshadowed by even more dramatic developments. All these and many other happenings are skilfully put together into a coherent pattern by Whitney H. Shepardson and William O. Scroggs for the Council on Foreign Relations. This volume, ninth of a series, presents the customary broad survey of American foreign policy against the background of wars in Europe, Africa, and Asia. An appendix of documents, chronology, bibliography, and index add greatly to the value of this unique narrative. Messrs. Shepardson and Scroggs write with their usual vivacity and with more than their usual contempt for isolationists. Their accurate, concise, and comprehensive treatment of American relations with the rest of the world is as always a valuable contribution for both the scholar and general reader.

James Frederick Green is on the staff of the Foreign Policy Association.

SOLUTION OF LAST WEEK'S DOUBLE-CROSTIC (No. 388)

LORD TWEEDSMUIR:
PILGRIM'S WAY

I have no objection to Mechanicsville and Higginsville and . . . Syracuse. They are a legitimate part of the record. And behind are the hoar-ancient memorials of the first dwellers, names like symphonies—Ticonderoga, . . . Shenandoah, Wyoming.

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The Churchill Cabinet

THE MEN AROUND CHURCHILL. By René Kraus. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co. 1941. 339 *pp.* $3.

Reviewed by ALLAN NEVINS

THIS book is something more than an interesting and informative group of portraits of British leaders; it is a proof of the resourcefulness of democracy, of the power of a free society to meet a great crisis with great men. A few years ago Great Britain seemed bankrupt of statesmen. Her leadership was as dispiriting a spectacle as that of the United States, let us say, in 1859. But the resiliency and thrust that the United States demonstrated in the change from Buchanan to Lincoln, Seward, Stanton, and Chase are matched by the pluck and address that Great Britain has exhibited in turning from Chamberlain to Churchill, Bevin, Halifax, and Beaverbrook. As a terrible crisis forms and breaks, democracy may seem intolerably slow and fumbling. But as the ordeal lengthens, its superiority in producing captains as well as in backing them becomes manifest. The Central Powers in the first World War could not bring forward one figure fit to stand beside the democratic triumvirate Wilson, Lloyd George, and Clemenceau. The gang of psychopaths, sadists, perverts, and corruptionists in Berlin made an effective showing for a time; but here are some of the hardworking thinkers and planners who will yet send them hurtling to destruction.

Mr. Kraus is interested in personalities, and his method is primarily anecdotal. Inevitably, his group of studies brings out the diversity of social elements from which the present British Government is drawn. Halifax is the son of a viscount, and went from Eton and Christ Church to marry the daughter of an earl and to enter Parliament; Bevin had no formal schooling after ten, and began life as a farm-laborer at sixpence a week, going on to be a tram-conductor and dock-union official. Eden came from an aristocratic family that had supplied Maryland with her last royal governor; "Bert" Alexander, first lord of the Admiralty, left a technical school at thirteen to be an errand boy. Beaverbrook was born in the parsonage of an impoverished Presbyterian minister in Ontario, and Sir Kingsley Wood in that of an almost equally poor Wesleyan clergyman in England. The middle classes are represented by Clement Attlee, who came out of a London flat, and Arthur Greenwood, who had a modest Leeds background. But rich or poor, self-educated or polished by university and London society, these men work with a harmony as remarkable as their devotion and energy. They work, too, with the same vision; for Halifax, Eden, and Archibald Sinclair believe as fervently in a more socialized democracy, a happier and more equal society, as do Bevin and Morrison.

A good deal of inside political history emerges from these spirited sketches, which are marked by as distinct a distaste for the old Baldwin-Chamberlain group in British affairs as by admiration for the present regime. The account of Anthony Eden contains some interesting bits on Eden's meetings with Hitler, Mussolini, and Stalin, and on his relations with Simon, Hoare, and Chamberlain. The twenty pages on Sir Stafford Cripps tell in some detail of his bitter one-man fight in the House of Commons against the Tories. When the war began he remarked: "We have two enemies, the Fascists abroad and the Fascist-minded at home, and we must fight each with equal determination." The sketch of Morrison tells of the role he played in the final overthrow of Chamberlain and the erection of the Churchill Government. Throughout the book Mr. Kraus offers a variety of intimate detail about men, parties, and departments of the kind that only an expert journalist can obtain. He explains how that remarkable Scotch-Irishman, Sir John Dill, constantly warned the army chiefs against their early reliance on the Maginot Line. He explains the close tie between Churchill and the head of the Air Ministry, Sir Archibald Sinclair. He throws light on the devotion of the British soldiers to General Wavell. In his final portrait, that of the King, he shows us the essential manliness of the sovereign, his tremendous industry, and his unpretentious earnestness. Nor is a word lacking about the Queen, who celebrated a birthday by giving the *furniture from sixty rooms in Windsor* Castle to refurnish bombed homes in the East End of London.

Keystone

Ernest Bevin

Mr. Kraus's sketches are not so incisively biting, not so critically balanced, as those which that consummate journalist, A. G. Gardiner, used to write. They are uniformly favorable and in part flattering. But then this is no time for criticism. The world is afire; the British democracy is beating back the flames that menace us all; and these brave, untiring leaders of an indomitable people deserve only admiration. The book is one to hearten all believers in Britain and all lovers of democracy, and it deserves a wide circulation among the faint-spirited and doubting.

Your Literary I. Q.

By Howard Collins

LITERARY APPELLATIVES

This week's quiz was suggested by Miss Amy Parker, of Fennimore, Wisconsin. Can you identify the famous writers from the descriptive phrases often applied to them which are listed below? Allowing 5 points for each correct answer, a score of 60 is par, 70 is good, 80 or better is excellent. Answers are on page 17.

1. The Mantuan Swan.
2. The Lying Traveler.
3. The Father of English Literature.
4. The Prince of Poets.
5. The Bard of Avon.
6. The British Homer.
7. The Tenth Muse Lately Sprung Up in America.
8. The Immortal Tinker.
9. The Prince of Gossips.
10. The Bard of Twickenham.
11. The Polyphemus of Literature.
12. The British Pindar.
13. The Marvellous Boy.
14. The Bard of Rydal Mount.
15. The Border Minstrel.
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The Saturday Review
of Literature

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USEFULNESS AND THE WRITER

HOWARD MUMFORD JONES makes an interesting and well-pointed complaint in his article in this issue when, after referring to Carl Sandburg as a "useful" writer who "dwells in a public world accessible to anyone who can read," he states it as his opinion that unless literature is to be useful in this sense, it is "likely to degenerate into an elaborate private game played with infinite relish by a selected few, but a game without general significance to the United States."

This is interesting not only because of its obvious validity, but because it is no less a truism today than it was 2000 years ago, when Aristophanes protested against what he called the "traitors to the stage." Progress there has been, certainly; but the big job before the writer today, as it always has been, is still to increase, as Mr. Jones calls it, his usefulness and accessibility. This is not a matter of writing-down, or of forced condescension. It is a matter, first, of awareness and sympathetic understanding; after that—but only after that—it becomes a matter of technique by which the writer may be understood. For the technique is important only in relation to the message and the image behind it.

A generous number of examples might be cited of contemporary writers who have achieved this balance of usefulness, but it is doubtful whether even our own age—and this is not restricted to American literature—can boast of three writers who could outshine Whitman, Tolstoy, and Heine in the art of understanding and being understood. At first glance this may seem a strange combination, but what each had in common with the other was a dislike of the extraneous, particularly as it referred to literature and literary criticism; all three of them—and they were contemporaries—were deeply concerned with the problems of the times in which they lived; and all three of them stood apart from those of their colleagues who, though recognizing the issues of the day, did little to bring themselves within reach of those who needed their help. Perhaps this is what caused Whitman to write in his "Democratic Vistas":

> Literature, strictly considered, has never recognized the people, and whatever may be said, does not today. Speaking generally, the tendencies of literature, as hitherto pursued, have been to make mostly critical and querulous men. It seems as if, so far, there were some natural repugnance between a literary and professional life, and the rude rank spirit of the democracies. . . . I know nothing more rare, even in this country, than a fit scientific estimate and reverent application of the People—of their measureless wealth of latent worth and capacity, their vast, artistic contrasts of lights and shades. . . .

It is only the accident of geography that separates Whitman from Tolstoy and Heine; but their blood relationship in the family of ideas transcends nationalities and physical superficialities. This despite the rather curious paradox that Whitman was as intensely American as any American writer before or since; just as Tolstoy and Heine represent the quintessence of the true Russian spirit and the true German spirit respectively. Their real and essential similarities are in abundant evidence in all their works. In "What Is Art?" Tolstoy seems almost as though he might be writing an introduction to "Democratic Vistas"—especially that portion of Whitman's work dealing with the seclusiveness of writers—when he says:

> For a work to be esteemed good, and to be approved of and diffused, it will have to satisfy the demands, not of a few people living in identical and often unnatural conditions, but it will have to satisfy the demands of all those great masses of people who are situated in the natural conditions of laborious life. And the artists producing art will not be, as now, merely a few people selected from a small section of the nation . . . but will consist of all those gifted members of the whole people who prove capable of, and are inclined towards, artistic activity.

And when Heinrich Heine speculated on posterity's opinion of him, he said he didn't know whether he deserved that "a laurel-wreath should one day be laid on my coffin" for his verses, because he never attached any great value to poetical fame. And yet:

> . . . lay on my coffin a *sword;* for I was a brave soldier in the Liberation War of humanity.

It is perhaps significant that both posterity in general and writers in particular now see in the work not only of Heine but of Whitman and Tolstoy a level of achievement in their service to humanity that is eminently worth emulating.

N. C.

My Very Young Son

By Sara Kolb Danner

"I WERE, I are, I be tomorrow,"
My young son's verbs are fluid, flowing,
But soon grammar will dam them up
With the rigid wall of knowing.

Will knowledge tutor this rhythm away
And leave his singing cold and dark
Which now mounts the aerial stair
As glad and free as a lark?

His pencil he holds like a fishing rod
And the flowing line is both bait and quarry,
His own bizarre, untempered stroke
Is very free and starry.

His mind can float like a changing cloud
And drift along in lovely fancy
Before the sun of life and years
Burn up its necromancy.

My young son runs like a leaping flame
His grace like a faun's is swift and nimble
Perpetual motion with running ease
Is a young's boy's symbol.

Poised on a surf board on a cobalt wave
He shall ride through the buffeting years
And laughingly blow into the sun
My spindrift of fears.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Traveling Library

SIR:—Somewhat late I have come upon the notes in *Trade Winds* of your issue of July 12 which refer to the library at Haddon Hall at Atlantic City. They brought to mind my surprise earlier this Summer at finding an inviting little library on the few shelves of the club car of a Canadian Pacific Railway train on which I traveled to the Canadian Rockies. There were, of course, a number of best sellers present but they were *good* best sellers and not all the volumes available were quite such obvious choices. In thousands of miles of American train travel I do not recall such an attractive library. In fact, with one exception, I don't recall any books at all!

RICHMOND B. WILLIAMS.
Brooklyn, New York.

Ti Ti Ti Tum

SIR:—In connection with the V for Victory campaign perhaps your readers may be interested in the fact that the rhythm of the Morse V, three shorts and a long, is not only the rhythm of Beethoven's Fate knocking at the door, but also constitutes a foot, the paeon quartus, which Æschylus uses in the Oresteia as a kind of Wagnerian motif for the Furies, the spirits of justice and punishment. The use of this foot begins as early as the first chorus, where it is woven in with other measures to suggest the idea of retribution; and reaches its climax in the last act, in a chorus known as the Binding Song, when the Furies dance round Orestes, casting over him a hypnotic incantation, with a refrain based on the insistent "ti ti ti tum ti ti ti tum." May the omen be fufilled! Hitler to the Furies!

BASIL DAVENPORT.
New York, N. Y.

"Exotic"

SIR:—Pity on a poor overworked word—"exotic." Every newspaper writer who wishes to show off his vocabulary manages to squeeze that word into his particular product.

One of the writers of contract-bridge columns relates that an alleged "expert," on self-constituted "authority," makes "exotic" bids. Meaning "fake," "guide," or "informatory" bids, designed to mislead the adversaries.

Why so much "exotic?"

WHIDDEN GRAHAM.
New York, N. Y.

"Slow Movement"

SIR:—High time it seems to me for someone who liked Virginia Hamilton's poem "Slow Movement," published in the July 12 issue, to write and say so. Mr. Holmes and other correspondents may have their opinions but to me it is an eminently satisfactory composition and no more obscure than some poetry by Browning, Emerson, and Edwin Arlington Robinson. I'll trade a dozen of your more explicit poems for another one like this.

DAVID PAINE, M.D.
Waltham, Massachusetts.

"Fine camper you turned out to be! Sixteen books and no coffee pot."

Information, Please

SIR:—I am interested in all material relative to the island of Martinique, particularly as regards its legendary and social history. Will you please ask your readers to put me in touch with any possible correspondence or old documents of any kind, which might prove of interest in the book I am contemplating on the subject.

SOPHIE L. GOLDSMITH.
140 West 58th Street,
New York, N. Y.

L'Affaire Safian

SIR:—Now that Messrs. L. B. Jones and Barry Corde have taken their fling at me in the *SRL* for August 30, could I enter my two cents worth in the fray and settle the whole matter?

Mr. Jones writes that most of his "generation was well furnished, not to say overstocked, with Longfellow's lyrics." Let me add that I am *not* a member of Mr. Jones's generation. I am a sixteen-year-old high school senior whose only experience with H.W.L. was the study of "Evangeline" way back in the eighth grade. Times change, and poetic diets change with them.

And now to answer Mr. Corde's query on the number of readers awake at the literary switch. To date I have received thirty-four replies of varying tone: detached, condescending, pedagogical, jovial. One was sent by a descendant of the Poet, Mr. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Dana, of Cambridge, Mass. Coupled with the fifty-three directed to the *SRL* editors, the total falls just short of one hundred. (Enough, Mr. Corde?) The number, however, is rather lame next to Mr. Jones's estimated fifty-thousand!

STANLEY SAFIAN.
Long Beach, N. Y.

Dep't of Correction

SIR:—Just to satisfy my curiosity, won't you let me know how many letters you receive telling you that in the July 26, *SRL*, page 18, Bigger Thompson in the quiz answers should have been Bigger Thomas?

I wrote to Macmillan some months ago pointing out two errors in a single paragraph of one of their books, and they told me that one of the errors—calling Jeeter Lester, Lester Jeeter, had already been pointed out by scores of readers. On the other hand they said that I was apparently the only person in the country who had noticed that other error—putting down Erskine Caldwell's book "Trouble in July" as "Trouble in August."

ALBERT GOLDSTEIN.
New Orleans, La.

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Louis Aragon
"Poet of the War"

HANNAH JOSEPHSON

Louis Aragon

IT used to be said, in the early twenties in Paris, that of all living French writers Louis Aragon was the most affable to visitors from abroad, and surely the sympathetic reception he granted to foreigners who had attempted in vain to overcome the shyness, indifference, or even hostility of other distinguished men of letters was like coming in out of the rain to sit before a bright fire. In those days Aragon was a risen sun in the literary firmament, illuminating everything he touched without scorching. Blessed by the elder French writers as a young lord of language, applauded by his contemporaries as a champion of youthful experiment, he was recognized everywhere for the boundless, already mature talent which so often shows itself in the French at an early age. His gaiety, then as now, was most infectious, and he was always willing to share an unexpected piece of good fortune—say a sum of money realized from the sale of a manuscript to a wealthy admirer—with his more impoverished friends of all nations. On one of these occasions, a few years after the First World War, I remember his taking about a dozen of us to Montmartre to celebrate the receipt of 150 francs that had unaccountably appeared in his morning mail. When the money ran out after each guest had drunk his very limited share of the champagne, Aragon simply shrugged his shoulders and sustained the spirit of intoxication by reciting innumerable verses of Victor Hugo. Then, the party over, there would be long walks through the darkened streets of Paris, with Aragon talking, talking about every conceivable problem of life or literature. This gift of his for speech he carried over directly into his writing. The French are naturally articulate, but the ability to reproduce in the written word the very tone and accent of common speech belongs particularly to Louis Aragon among his generation.

Born in 1897, Aragon was not slow to indicate his preference for a career of letters, for at the age of seven he had already written a complete novel, consisting of about fifteen chapters in as many pages, but containing the most remarkable complexities of plot and characterization. When it was published in *Littérature,* the monthly organ of the Dadaists, in 1923, it was impossible not to make the analogy with the infant Mozart. Aragon finished his studies at the lycée, and had undertaken a year's work in medicine before he was called to serve in the army in the First World War. After his demobilization he returned to his medical studies, and before he realized that literature, and not medicine, was his proper calling, he had somehow found time to write four books. This was while serving his interneship in a large Paris hospital, when he was still in his early twenties. "Feu de Joie," a volume of poems, published in 1920, won instant attention and acclaim from the critics; "Anicet," a novel about a Stendhalian hero among the anarchist bandits of Paris in 1911, one of the first books ever written in the cinematic technique, was published in 1921; "Le Libertinage," a book of short stories of striking originality of form, several of which were translated and published in advance-guard American literary reviews, appeared as a collection in 1924; a second novel, "Les Aventures de Télémaque," had been published the year before, and was distinguished; among other things, for containing one chapter made up entirely of a single word endlessly repeated, simply because Aragon liked the sound: "Mirabelle, Mirabelle . . . etc."

Though the endless repetition of a single word had, from Aragon's point of view, been dictated by poetic necessity, it was still a trick calculated to win the admiration of his contemporaries. At the close of the war Aragon, together with André Breton, Philippe Soupault, and Tristan Tzara, had launched the Dadaist movement, which its originators termed "a state of mind," rather than a school, and which was destined to attract a large part of the young literary talent in Europe then lying around and wondering where to go. By far the most prolific and talented of the creative writers in the group was Louis Aragon.

In the middle twenties, under the leadership of Breton, Soupault and Aragon, the Dadaist movement underwent a sea-change, and without dropping its iconoclasm, so far as the old schools were concerned, adopted a more affirmative program, emerging as Surrealism. Once again Aragon was in the forefront of the new trend, which explored realms of sensation and consciousness unknown before Freud, and asserted the supremacy of dream-life over other forms of action and experience. It was at this period that he wrote "Le Paysan de Paris," a "classical" work of the experimental era, which, more than any other previous work, established his reputation.

But as the world crisis approached, the atmosphere of the literary coteries proved too confining for him, in spite of the valuable elements in the Surrealist movement, which none had assayed more thoroughly than he, and Aragon's gifts sought a wider arena in which to deploy. The enormous dislocations of the world depression in the early 1930's brought home to him the plight of human beings as such, rather than as figures of speech. A period of travel, observation and study confirmed him in his abhorrence of the Fascist solution to the current problems. On his return to France he entered the field of journalism, in which he soon attained a position of prominence, helping to found the Popular Front evening paper *Ce Soir*—set up to compete with the conservative *Paris-Soir*—and becoming its editor-in-chief. The newspaper under his direction quickly reached a wide circulation, filling a long-felt popular need for a journal of pronounced anti-Fascist policy, for which M. Paul Bonnet, the appeaser of the Nazis, often felt called upon to denounce Aragon bitterly in the Chamber of Deputies.

It was while in the midst of a crowded schedule as editor of a large metropolitan daily that Aragon embarked on a form of writing new to him, for which all his talents and training had, however, prepared him, and which his newly awakened social consciousness had made imperative: the novel of social realism. His work in this form he refers to as "The Real

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World," although each of the three novels that has appeared under this general title is complete in itself. "Les Cloches de Basle" (brought out in America as "The Bells of Basle"), his first effort in this direction, was published in Paris in 1934. This was followed by "Les Beaux Quartiers" (Residential Quarter), which appeared in 1937. Both books have run into many editions in France. His most mature and ambitious novel thus far, "Les Voyageurs de l'Impériale" is due to be brought out this year in Paris.

Rejecting the mode for the gargantuan novel that takes a lifetime to read, and of which Marcel Proust, Roger Martin du Gard, and Jules Romains are the most famous (if unequal) exponents, Aragon in "The Real World" has reverted to earlier models, that of Balzac in the "Comédie Humaine" and Zola in "Les Rougon-Macquart," who gave an exhaustive history of their own time in a series of separate panels. Like his great prototypes, Aragon describes a different milieu and a new set of characters in each novel, and in each novel the picture of life in France under the Third Republic is rounded out still further. "The Real World" is concerned with real people and the impact of actual events on their personal histories, a literal approach to which Aragon's earlier preoccupations with the world of images, dreams, and the subconscious have only given an edge. Of the present volume he has written that "it presupposes a detailed knowledge of the history of the French novel," and it is not surprising to find here suggestion of the romanticism of Constant and Hugo, the realism of Balzac, the naturalism of Zola, and the psychological complexity of Gide.

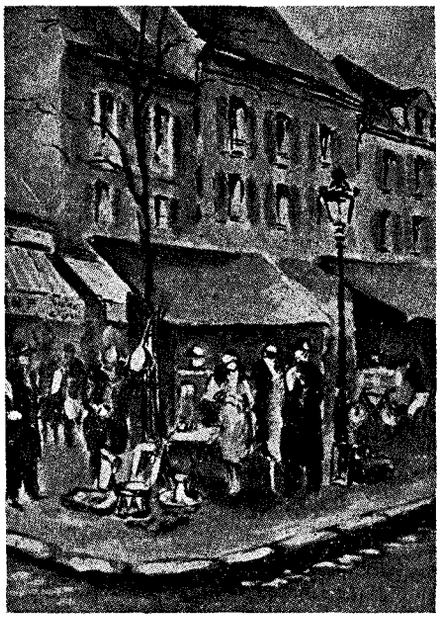
All of French life is to be found in these novels, the good as well as the bad, elegant society, the middle classes, the peasantry, workers, teachers, doctors, artists, politicians, industrialists, even the denizens of a brothel. To say that a novelist must have a deep understanding of people's motives is only a truism: Louis Aragon knows his people well enough to balance the conflict of motives to so just a poise that we can see the scales still quivering after the balance has been achieved. We can see too all the causes of the French defeat here, the corruption, the relentless individualism, the lack of unity and social purpose, and perhaps, in spite of momentary defeat, all the promise of that crushed and bleeding country as well: the fundamental intelligence of the French as a people, the realism and just self-appraisal, the spirit of high adventure not yet burned out in them. If we should ever be obliged to ask: "What was France?", "The Real World" will tell us.

In the summer of 1939 Louis Aragon had finished "The Century Was Young," and had outlined in his mind and for his friends the plans for a new novel, which was to be, quite simply, a love story. But in these times, when every man's life reads like an item in the newspapers, the fall of 1939 found him in uniform, like millions of his countrymen. Twenty years before he had seen service in the trenches, and had been decorated. Now, twenty years older, he was at first attached to a regiment of men of his own age, then transferred up toward the front to join a tank corps manned by youths. "Who knows where there is a better place for a man of my kind?" he wrote (in English) to friends in America. "I feel very sport-[ing] about it and rather happy, at 42, to be still counted as a young boy. . . . I am writing poetry like a devil: having two reasons to do it, the war and my wife. The second being the first, if I dare say . . . "

"Time has found again her plodding pace," begins the first poem he sent back to his wife from the then quiet front in the fall of 1939, a poem whose nostalgic tone is set by the wry irony of the title: "Twenty Years After," taken from the novel of that name by Alexander Dumas the elder.

Time has found again her plodding pace
In slow red oxen yoked to a rumbling cart
Autumn has come: the gilded leaves embrace
Patches of sky. October sleeps apart.

These carolingian days find us dull kings
Our dreams crawl forward with the cows' slow tread
Unknown to us men die at the field's fringe
And sunset knows not what the dawn has bred.



When Paris was still Paris . . .

The time of platitudes is come again
We lay aside our pride. The tune we know
And hum unchecked is that absurd refrain
We heard so often on the radio.

A soldier's life, twenty years after having said good-by to all that; once more into battle, with a pencil and paper in his knapsack along with heavier and more deadly equipment.

Twenty years is but a child's life span
And yet we see now all the innocents
The children of yesterday sent forth again
To march with us their elders—cruel penitence.

Ironic title: After Twenty Years
In which is written all that we have lived. . . .

And now Aragon's own story takes on the quality of a nightmare, or of one of those improbable adventures recorded by Dumas himself: "In a few words," he wrote to friends in America after the Battle of France was ended, "this is what happened. I was among the first French troops to enter Belgium, and I went through the whole campaign in Flanders under extremely adventurous circumstances. Our army was one of those encircled, and it was only by the most miraculous good luck that we were able to reach the sea and embark at Dunkirk. After less than two days in England, we returned to France by way of Brest, and from Basse-Seine to south of Angoulême we were in constant contact with the German army. In Angoulême I was taken prisoner the last day of the war, but I succeeded in escaping with thirty men and six trucks."

We pick up after twenty years our ways
Of old upon the threshold of oblivion. . . .

Decorated in the field with the Croix de Guerre (his second, since he had been cited for the same honor in the last war) Aragon later received a third, with palms, and the Médaille Militaire, whose citation required the signature of the Commander-in-chief of the army. But a decoration perhaps more highly esteemed, though less tangible, was to find himself, six months later, while living very quietly in the south of France on the narrow ledge of want where all the French are huddled today, referred to in the press not only as a war hero, but as "the only poet of the war," and to hear his verses read again and again on the radio "in the very accent of the Comédie Française."

This article constitutes the translator's Foreword from the new novel by Louis Aragon, "The Century Was Young," to be published in October by Duell, Sloan & Pearce.

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R. P. Smith . . .

SO IT DOESN'T WHISTLE. By Robert Paul Smith. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co. 1941. 234 *pp.* $2.50.

Reviewed by PHIL STONG

THIS book contains about equal parts of Joyce, Saroyan, and Budd Schulberg; liquor, love, jazz music, and stream-of-consciousness reflections on death and such items are all inextricably mixed in a combination that is somewhat dizzying. The book is extremely funny in its more lucid passages. It is tougher, perhaps, than the recent "What Makes Sammy Run" in its exteriors because in addition to the fact that *all* of the men and women described are "loose," the scenes include one homosexual carnival and one masochistic love scene. Aside from these details the book is suitable for the *Christian Science Monitor* since the philosophies are not especially heterodox.

The story is almost indistinguishable. Four eccentric young Jews room together when they are not rooming with their mistresses who are, to a considerable extent, communal. Three of them choose the least bad of the coöperative harem and marry them, leaving "Dutch," the most voluble philosopher, alone. "Dutch" doesn't like it so he kicks a hole in a good but magnificently obscene painting and breaks his favorite phonograph record.

This bald synopsis hardly does justice to a book which is brilliant in the writing in some places and is deliberately and cunningly "screwball" in most. Perhaps the Yiddish legend from which the title is taken illustrates the manner of the book better than any attempted description.

> The Old Jew attempts a riddle for the Young Jew. "What is it that is green and hangs on a wall and whistles?"
>
> The young man gives up.
>
> "A red herring."
>
> "But it isn't green."
>
> "So you paint it green."
>
> "But it doesn't hang on a wall!"
>
> "There is some law you shouldn't hang it on the wall?"
>
> "But it doesn't whistle."
>
> "Nu," says the old man sadly. "It doesn't whistle."

Anyone who enjoys a "screwball" story—and anyone with a sufficiently exquisite sense for the incongruous does—will probably enjoy "So It Doesn't Whistle."

Phil Stong, a frequent contributor to these pages, is the author of "The Princess."

C. P. Smith . . .

Chard Powers Smith

LADIES DAY. By Chard Powers Smith. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1941. 491 *pp.* $2.75.

Reviewed by R. L. NATHAN

MR. C. P. SMITH has written a lengthy and vigorous historical piece about the 1880's when America was growing and kicking right out of its breeches. It is a novel quite sumptuously "furnished." Every brick, bow, and bustle is there, every prancing horse, croquet stick, flowery syllable. Byzantium, N. Y., the immediate scene, lives here like a well-preserved tinted print of the period. The protagonists, on the other hand, seem a little dusty. Chief among them is one Race Kirkwood, who can best be described as three parts Rhett Butler, and one Clark Gable. It is difficult not to feel him leering and twisting his mustache at us, as he shoulders his way about, bad and masculine and irresistible. Worse than that is his inspired second-guessing at history. When he cries out, "There's a young fella I know in Cleveland has already made the oil business into somethin' about as big as the Roman Empire . . . young Scotchman in Pittsburgh is aimin' to do the same thing with steel . . . " we want to expostulate, "See here, Kirkwood, Mr. Smith told you all that!" Aside from high jinks and finance, there is the up-and-down love affair between Kirkwood and Sally Lathrop, a gentle lady, no Scarlett she but a dewy Melanie. They pursue their attachment to its bitter end, neatly achieving recognition of their difference without actual tragedy.

Wilson . . .

YESTERDAY'S SON. By William E. Wilson. New York: Farrar & Rinehart. 1941. 307 *pp.* $2.50.

Reviewed by RICHARD A. CORDELL

THE Author of "The Wabash," one of the most readable of the Rivers of America series, now tries his hand at fiction and has ample reason to view his first novel with satisfaction. "Yesterday's Son" with admirable economy (it is an excellent single-sitting novel) tells the story of three adults and a youth who learn through harrowing experience that the dead past does not always bury its dead, and that what's done is not always done. A professor of English in a New England college is jolted out of his comfortable academic routine when he discovers that a sprawling, sullen freshman in his Survey class is his illegitimate son; then the mother learns of her son's knowledge of his parentage, and finally confesses to her husband her infidelity of eighteen years before. The situation is powerfully dramatic—in fact, "Yesterday's Son," like a short story, is concerned with a situation rather than with a march of events; but it is by no means merely a blown-up short story, for it achieves adequate fullness and expansiveness.

The excellence of this first novel lies not in its style, which rarely rises above the commonplace, but in its shrewd characterization. Wisely limiting his characters to a few, the novelist succeeds in making each plausible and—unusual in serious modern fiction—likable. His is a "Strange Interlude" about normal men and women, who entangle their lives and yet escape neuroticism and empty frustration. The author is fair to his characters. The husband, a New England Brahmin, is seemingly aloof and passionless, prim and meticulous; but we finally see him as shy and timid, still frightened by an ignominious childhood poverty, and yearning for affection. The boy is puzzling, for he is bewildered and stunned. The thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts, and sometimes length is their only dimension; but when Larry begins to understand himself and others, incongruities and paradoxes in his own thinking and conduct begin to disappear.

The backgrounds—rural New England and the college—are carefully done but not overdone. There is little humor except in some of the academic portraits and possibly in the many tiny jabs at Harvard, but there is little occasion for humor in this tense study of four people in a trap from which it is impossible to escape without wounds and suffering.

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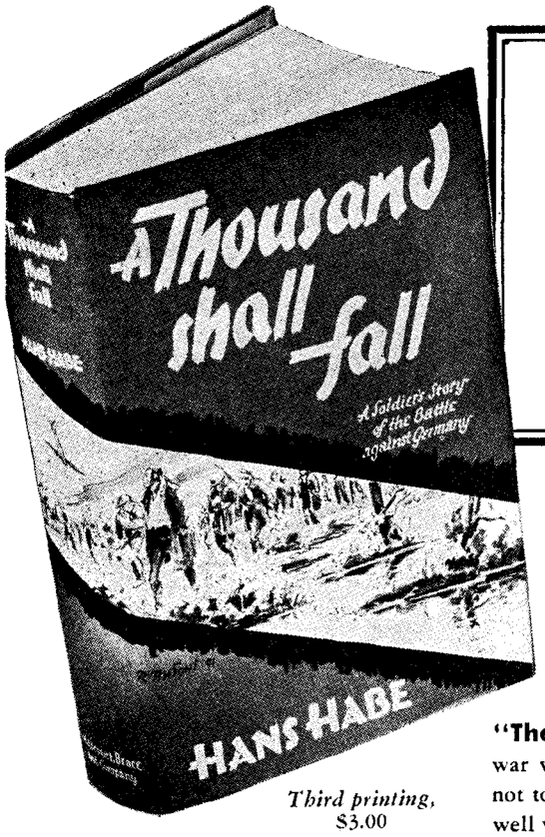

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DeJong . . .

DAY OF THE TRUMPET. By David Cornel DeJong. New York: Harper & Bros. 1941. 344 *pp.* $2.50.

Reviewed by KLAUS LAMBRECHT

SEVERAL years ago Mr. DeJong wrote a delightful book called "Old Haven." It was a novel about the leisurely life in a little town in Holland, full of the beauty, the warmth and abundance of an old Dutch painting. These qualities we find again in his latest book, though not quite as undisturbed. We find the same sympathetic portrayal of the Dutch character, but it has become more penetrating, more exacting. A new element has entered the author's poetic world of peace and mellowness, an element of indignation, so strong and urgent that after the marked constraint of the first two hundred pages it explodes upon the book like the bombs dropped on the dreaming town of Daverdam that becomes the scene of stirring events.

It is a picture of complacency, springing from that particularly Dutch conception of enjoyment, that introduces the reader to the life of the Haming family. They are numerous and rather dissimilar in their characteristics, and though they all are drawn with care and comprehension, two of them stand out for their distinctive qualities — the grandmother who always, even in the hour of crisis, has the situation in hand, being the brains and the living force of the family, defending their simple and decent way of life; and Dirkie, her grandson, the little boy who strolls through the narrow streets between the gabled houses of the town, puzzling and musing, even with the German bombers in the sky, and who sometimes finds a truth which others were unable to discover. The scene is quiet and friendly —as peaceful as it has been for centuries. The people do not see far beyond their narrow range of life; they know nothing about the dynamic force that aims at the destruction of their freedom and they refuse to see the forebodings of the threat.

One morning, shortly after dawn, the farmer Moente has to evacuate his farm. The dams and sluices are opened and the waters are flooding his land, while near Daverdam little Dirkie watches the planes roaring across the skies above his home town and sees parachutists drop into the empty streets. In Rotterdam, where his mother desperately searches for her husband, an inferno of bombing and fire breaks loose, but a few days later she finds herself at his side returning home. The whole thing is over, the family has survived, even though their way of life has been destroyed, their faith in humanity betrayed. They are a conquered people, but a people which—thank God—still has in them the spirit of revolt.

It is the same spirit that has urged Mr. DeJong to write this book. He did not want to write it; he is a poet, not a fighter. But in this time of ours, when the very ground from which poetry springs is threatened, many an ivory tower has already been shattered. Mr. DeJong himself admits that before the invasion of Holland, which is his native country, his conception of Hitlerism has been merely theoretical but that after it he awakened to a rather grim realization. Essentially, it is the same experience he now describes in his novel, although the Hamings of Daverdam had to learn their lesson the hard and painful way—as too many of the others have had to do.

So, obviously, the book has not been written for a dramatic effect. Mr. DeJong is not a dramatic writer; the strength of his talent lies in the description which, though often slow and halting, is always rich and beautiful, vivid and impressive. He also has a rare gift of characterization; he knows people and their reactions, and above all he knows the Dutch temperament. The Haming family is symbolic of the spirit of free men everywhere; they inspire confidence in a final triumph of humanity and make this novel one of the most encouraging books to come out of the war.

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Hervey . . .

SCHOOL FOR ETERNITY. By Harry Hervey. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. 1941. 340 *pp.* $2.50.

Reviewed by N. L. ROTHMAN

MR. HERVEY tells a good story. He is entirely at ease, with all the mechanics of the art at his finger-tips: the colorful scene, the lively characters, the constant movement, the plunge of event. It is just too bad that in this case he has chosen a story that has already been thoroughly, and better, done. For as soon as we are introduced at the outset to the climactic catastrophe (an earthquake has shattered a castle, with all of its inhabitants), and as soon as we behold the words of Father Damon, "I do not believe people die because they are bad or because they are good, but because they are either intrinsically useless or have worn out their usefulness," then the whole pattern is clearly foreshadowed. This is Wilder's "Bridge of San Luis Rey" again, told in precisely the same terms except for the necessary variation in detail. Here the scene is the island of San Liguori in the West Indies. The rich and eccentric Count Girghiz has invited a group of strangely assorted guests to dine with him in his castle, the night of the earthquake. It is later that the narrator, seeking the meaning of these deaths, traces back into the lives of the guests, as well as some others. What he turns up makes the body of the book, a series of histories episodically told. We find uselessness, and desperation, aridity, guilt, some final exaltation, some heroism. And then the earthquake, the judgment.

There is no objection to this repetition of Wilder's plot, except of course that the comparison is invited, by which Hervey suffers. A literary device is like any other art form; you have to believe in it while you are using it. In Wilder's book the idea was a force, a philosophy, whether or not you agreed with it. In Hervey's it is a good literary trick to tie up a lot of diverse stories. It is not stated seriously, but wittily, by a priest whom Hervey defines as a charming rascal who believes in nothing. The eight histories must stand on their own, then, some good, some pointless, while the book surrenders any pretensions of gravity.

Crisis Pamphlets

Under the leadership of Ralph Barton Perry, an organization known as American Defense, Harvard Group, has compiled a special listing of crisis pamphlets. The address of this Group is P. O. Box 160, Cambridge, Mass.

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The Talk of Boston

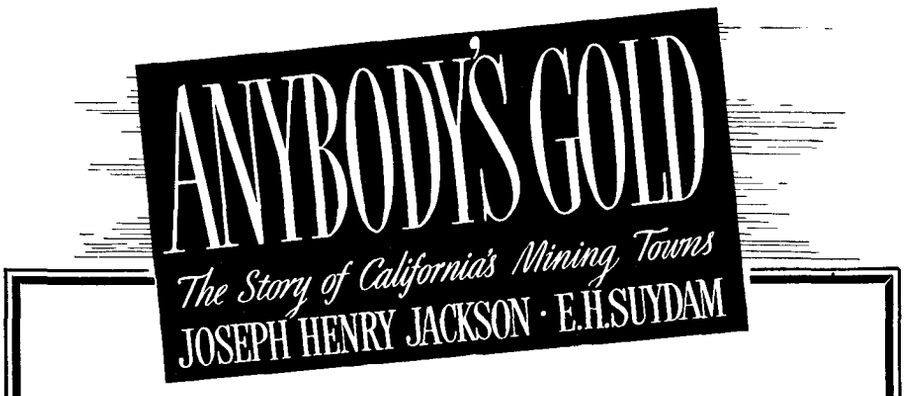
A VENTURE IN REMEMBRANCE. By M. A. DeWolfe Howe. Boston: Little, Brown & Company. 1941. 319 *pp.* $2.50.

Reviewed by HOWARD MUMFORD JONES

"SIR, we had a good talk!" Dr. Johnson unwittingly defined the essence of good autobiographical writing, and Mr. Howe fulfills the definition. Since there can be no real objectivity in autobiography, the next best thing is that the writer shall speak out of the amplitude of his experience with men, measures, and opinions, provided he be reasonably literate and not too long winded. "A Venture in Remembrance" is a short book; and the fact that Mr. Howe has almost forty titles after his name—the list is obscurely buried on the last pages of this book—is guarantee, if any were needed, of his literacy.

This talk is traditional Boston talk that goes back through Oliver Wendell Holmes and Tom Appleton to Mather Byles. It is the talk of a gentleman and a scholar; and if persons as divers as Santayana and Marquand have listened to this kind of talk with raised eyebrows, the tradition has vitality, and Mr. Howe must be excepted from the general condemnation visited upon the genteel tradition. To be sure, he was not born in Boston, but his chronicle is the story of a life spent almost wholly in New England and in the shadow of the State House. His literary work has been associated with Boston and Harvard College, the *Youth's Companion* and the *Atlantic,* the Beacon Biographies and the "Later Years of the Saturday Club." He has known almost all the famous figures of the New England Indian summer as well as a good many leaders of the current New England renaissance—for New England, like the middle class, is always rising. And he has been the official biographer of a number of eminent Boston men.

Nevertheless, Mr. Howe escapes from that snobbism which was the ruin of Thomas Bailey Aldrich. His pages breathe honesty and simplicity. He voted for Wilson and he admires FDR; he condemns the attitude of the well-born towards "muckers," and he laments the narrowmindedness which has set the Irish, the Italian, the Jew, and the Portuguese against the Yankee in a land that has prided itself on its faith in the individual. "Had the best representatives of this [the Irish majority] and the Jewish element in the population," he writes, "been made to feel less alien to the older Boston, a recent Irish governor of Massachusetts might have had no occasion to declare, as he did, that the citizens of his race and religion, now in the position to which their majority entitled them, would proceed to deal with the outnumbered as they had been dealt with in the past, and relegate the older stock to an inferior place." At seventy Mr. Howe is still hopeful of easing the tension among races and religions in eastern Massachusetts. If the old stock had all been like Mr. Howe, there would have been less tension and more tolerance. The excellence of his liberalism cannot remedy the deficiencies of a tradition, but he makes us remember that simplicity, courage, and humor can flourish even on Beacon Hill and Louisburg Square.



WRITTEN by Joseph Henry Jackson, famed California author and reviewer, illustrated with E. H. Suydam's beautiful drawings, this magnificent book captures the fact and legend of California's gold rush towns. Here is the story of who the "Forty-Niners" were and how they lived, together with a full account of the picturesque ghost towns today, including maps. "The best book I have seen written and one of the most readable books about California. Rich, redolent, American story telling."—LEWIS GANNETT. $5.00

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Summary of Law

THE QUEST FOR LAW. By William Seagle. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. 1941. 456 *pp., with index,* $5.

Reviewed by JAMES REID PARKER

THAT a good comparative history of law need not be written according to the standard formula for "popularized" surveys of vast subjects is at once obvious to anyone who stops to think about the matter. The chronological approach simply won't work—if one wishes to produce a readable book. The reader would soon be surfeited with overlapping *Codes,* with repetitious *Institutes.* In "The Quest for Law," Mr. William Seagle, wishing to do a history of law that might reach much the same audience as did, say, "The Story of Philosophy," outlines a history of law not according to periods, but according to natural growth. He discusses change, not isolated civilizations. The Salian Franks, for example, are not marooned in a big fat chapter; the Romans are not confined to an even bigger and fatter one. In this book, Roman Law, like all the other fundamentals, pops up wherever it is needed to clarify a point. We follow the growth of law as an ever-broadening river which, at the book's end, empties into the uncharted sea of the future. The author is not so presumptuous as to attempt to navigate that sea, but he does do an excellent job of mapping the river.

"The Quest for Law" is not, in the circulating-library sense of the word, easy. The extent of Mr. Seagle's scholarship is staggering, and the book is rich in valories of allusiveness. I venture to suggest, however, that its appeal will be wide, for Mr. Seagle has not gone to the other extreme and done a gaseous dissertation. He has preserved, throughout, the good manners of a likeable essayist, with the result that "The Quest for Law" is both enormously informative and exceedingly readable. Nor is this a book for snobs, a "Can you talk intelligently about the law?" affair. Instead, it is an informed and very well written history accompanied by stimulating analyses and interpretations which, by and large, are sound, and a book that mature readers are certain to enjoy. True, there will be a few healthy complaints. I know lawyers who will object to the manner in which Mr. Seagle gives poor old Coke down the banks, and laymen who will fume at his attributing "I accept the universe!" to Walt Whitman. (Even a few lawyers may worry about this one.) But in a book of such immense scope, surely occasional minor prejudices as well as minor errors are inevitable and forgivable. Mr. Seagle remains a thoroughly competent scholar-writer. A man who knows as much as he does might almost introduce a few errors on purpose so as not to be accused of showing off.

The basic scheme of "The Quest for Law" is in five parts, leading off with the basic elements and going through "Primitive Law," "Archaic Law," "The Maturity of the Law," and "The Vanishing-Points of Jurisprudence" to an excellently reasoned conclusion entitled "Justice According to the Law." As to the chapters, I particularly admired "The Peace of the Kindred," "The Origins of Property," "The Quest for Equity," "The Law of Nature," "The Monopoly of Force," "The Omnipotence of Contract," and "Administrative Law," this last with four subdivisions admirably developed: "The Law Nobody Knows," *"Droit Administratif,"* "The New Equity," and "Administrative Justice and the Supremacy of the Law." I thought the chapter called "The Law of Nature and of Nations" more arguable than any of the others, but not less interesting on that account.

The notes and bibliographies are a perfect joy. Mr. Seagle heretically believes that such things should be as engaging as the main matter. One can only hope that this idea turns out to be contagious.

James Reid Parker is the author of "Academic Procession," and "Attorney At Law."

HAS JUST 5 DAYS TO WIN $500,000

Partner of Slain Expert Must Move Fast to Meet Law's Dead-line

BREWERY EMPLOYE SOUGHT

SAN FRANCISCO, Aug. 21—A possible motive for the murder of George MacLeod, expert tax consultant, was disclosed today by the police in the fact that, just prior to his death, he had prepared to file claim for $500,000 in overpaid taxes on the estate of a bootlegging brewery operator.

Under the statute of limitations, such claim must be filed within four years of payment and only five days remain for James Whitney, partner of MacLeod, to discover the basis on which MacLeod proposed to act. If he succeeds, police circles say, Whitney will at the same time solve the mystery of the murder.

Whitney, and Detective Lieut. Webster, who is in charge of the case, believe the key to their puzzle was the brewery's former . . . . . .

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The Saturday Review's Guide to Detective Fiction

Title and Author	*Crime, Place, and Sleuth*	*Summing Up*	*Verdict*
THE CORPSE ON THE FLYING TRAPEZE *Nigel Morland* (Farrar & Rinehart: $2.)	English aerialist swings over stage minus head, which event riles Mrs. Pym and leads to international complications.	Female terror of Scotland Yard shown at her best—although some of the "inspirational" passages are pretty tiresome.	Spotty
THE WESTGATE MYSTERY *Darby St. John* (Random House: $2.)	Epidemic of murder and lesser crimes in sacrosanct circles of California suburb eventually stopped by Judge Havoc and active dowager.	Solution may not stand acid test but various tragedies, events leading up to same, and constant suspense make good reading.	Entertaining
THE TURQUOISE SHOP *Frances Crane* (Lippincott: $2.)	Three murders in and near New Mexican artists colony filled with odd fish give Peter Abbott of 'Frisco bus-man's holiday.	Distinguished for one of nastiest females in contemporary mysteries, a likable heroine and sleuth whose methods are logical and interesting.	Good stuff

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THE LIMITS OF CONTEMPORARY CRITICISM

(*Continued from page 4*)

on Greek drama—the tendency to read into the hieratic stasis of an ancient religious ritual the intellectual restlessness of the contemporary theater.

Three other essays really make the book. A long analysis of "Finnegans Wake" will aid those who wish to solve that cross-word puzzle, concerning which Mr. Wilson has had the good sense to say: " 'Finnegans Wake,' in the actual reading, seems to me for two-thirds of its length not really to bring off what it attempts." "Finnegans Wake" is our equivalent of extreme Gongorism, the literary pathology of which was studied some years ago by Elisha Kent Kane in a trenchant book which all literary critics should read, and do not. Because it is the fashion to admire unreservedly "Finnegans Wake," Mr. Wilson's breadth of critical judgment sticks the more fiery off.

But the jewels of the volume are the two opening essays, the one on Dickens, the other on Kipling. No one, not even George Santayana, in a short essay on Dickens which says more in less space than any other commentator has hitherto said—no one, it seems to me, has written more penetrating interpretation of two great, imperfect, and misunderstood geniuses. Johnson, discussing Burke, spoke of his winding into his subject. Mr. Wilson winds into his subjects, he gives us a fresh and valid point of view, he compels us to remake all our conventional opinions about Dickens and about Kipling, he sets these two men in lights which reveal values and show the reason for limitations—in short, he makes us want to read Kipling and Dickens all over again.

Now in so doing, Mr. Wilson has used the instruments of social and psychological analysis which have been forged in twentieth-century discussion. But his use is to illuminate a body of writing, and not to reform or to indoctrinate or to make criticism do the work of sociology. His analysis is subordinate to the main interest of the essays, which is to answer the question why the prose of these two men is as it is and not otherwise. Departing from the premise that the novelists suffered profound psychic shocks in boyhood, he shows how this conditioned the relation of the artist to society and to what he included (or omitted from) his books. But with Mr. Wilson the analytical process is always subordinate to the aim of critical penetration, the literature is not subordinated to the analysis. It is the failure to distinguish between means and ends which confuses much of the critical writing of the day. This failure Mr. Wilson avoids.

And yet Mr. Wilson cannot escape his time. His essays are lucid, are penetrating, but they are *ad hoc*. One does not rise from his pages enriched by philosophy. He drops no *obiter dicta* of the kind which constantly enrich the fragmentary pages of Coleridge. I feel that I am wiser about Dickens and Kipling than I was, I feel that my knowledge of the structure and implications of the English novel has been enriched, but I am not certain that Mr. Wilson has increased the reader's stock of general ideas. He is an able critic—perhaps the ablest critic now writing in the United States—but could we select from this volume an essay to go into the imaginary anthology I spoke of a moment ago? No, the essays have their excellence, but it is not excellence of this kind. And if the comment be made that in times of confusion, one cannot expect the literary critic to be more philosophic than the general run of mankind, the retort is both immediate and uncomfortable: If literature is to give up its function as a guide and aider to wisdom, what function does it retain except the function of amusement, the dilettante function, the function of mere personal confession with which the printing presses groan? No, we have not yet solved our problem—perhaps we shall never solve it—but in so far as contemporary criticism is marked by the refusal of the problem, it is criticism of the second order of attainment rather than of the first.

ANSWERS TO LITERARY QUIZ

1. Virgil.
2. Sir John Mandeville.
3. Chaucer.
4. Edmund Spenser.
5. Shakespeare.
6. Milton.
7. Anne Bradstreet.
8. John Bunyan.
9. Samuel Pepys.
10. Alexander Pope.
11. Samuel Johnson.
12. Thomas Gray.
13. Thomas Chatterton.
14. William Wordsworth.
15. Sir Walter Scott.
16. Ralph Waldo Emerson.
17. Thomas Hardy.
18. James Whitcomb Riley.
19. Leonard Merrick.
20. Robert W. Service.

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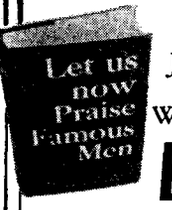

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Collier . . .

FIRE IN THE SKY. By Tarleton Collier. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co. 1941. 457 *pp.* $2.50.

Reviewed by FRANCES SMYTH

ALTHOUGH this is Mr. Collier's first novel, it doesn't read like one. It is free of uncertainty and unbalance. There is a lot in it and not too much of anything. His story of a woman's fight to win for herself and her child a way of life both honorable and satisfying is a story told with wisdom, warmth, and justice. Mr. Collier is a Southerner, an ex-newspaperman, and a member of the staff of the Farm Security Administration. He has strong feelings about his subject; he knows a great many things about it; and his book is the happy synthesis of what he feels and knows.

Lolly Rickett was born in Georgia, child of a mother who loved her and an unknown father. Until the age of fourteen she lived in one or another cabin on one or another cotton plantation: a cropper's child and herself a cropper. After her mother's death and a few years as house-servant and field-hand combined, Lolly was snatched briefly into a new and glorious world. Her marriage, lasting little more than a year, ending abruptly with her husband's death by violence, remained the one lovely interval in Lolly's life. From thereon she fought—triumphantly in the end;—fought not only to support herself and her daughter but to assure the child, at least, a chance at that splendid future in which her husband had believed and to the hope of which he had been willing to sacrifice his life.

Lolly is forty when the book ends. By that time she and the reader have met many sorts of people and institutions. Not all of them are handled with equal conviction. The hotel business, in which Lolly makes her way, has been more successfully explored in other novels. The Southern politician who is her friend is almost a satisfactory study of a not-bad-hearted opportunist, but fails somehow of completeness. Lolly, herself, however, is consistently fine: always believable, always in focus. In Lolly's dogged working out of her destiny and in the shifting currents that make up her changing worlds, Tarleton Collier has written a truthful and moving book.

PERSONALS

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PERSONALS

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Double-Crostics: No. 389

By ELIZABETH S. KINGSLEY

■	1- R	2- D	3- V	4- Y	5- W	■	6- L	7- E	8- N	9- J	10- Q	11- C	12- W	■	13- E	14- A
15- J	16- L	17- Q	18- N	19- Y	■	20- A	21- O	22- U	23- H	■	24- Y	25- K	26- D	27- T	28- H	■
29- J	30- V	31- Y	32- L	33- M	34- G	35- K	■	36- H	37- K	■	38- I	39- M	40- H	41- B	42- D	■
43- I	44- N	45- F	46- G	47- C	■	48- L	49- H	50- N	51- P	52- C	■	53- W	54- B	55- M	56- O	■
57- Y	58- F	59- A	60- U	61- N	62- O	63- G	■	64- C	65- T	66- U	67- X	■	68- Q	69- D	70- S	71- W
■	72- I	73- R	74- Q	75- V	76- A	77- O	78- U	79- C	■	80- K	■	81- I	82- U	83- E	84- J	■
85- Q	86- W	87- Y	88- T	■	89- P	90- W	91- S	■	92- E	93- U	94- P	95- D	96- Q	■	97- D	98- X
■	99- F	100- G	101- M	102- S	103- T	104- X	105- V	■	106- B	107- M	108- C	■	109- V	110- P	111- X	112- N
■	113- G	114- M	115- C	116- H	117- K	118- U	119- P	■	120- U	121- K	122- G	■	123- H	124- V	125- B	126- W
■	127- Q	128- H	129- U	130- C	131- Y	■	132- B	133- U	134- O	135- K	■	136- W	■	137- D	138- C	139- P
140- S	■	141- I	142- F	143- C	144- T	145- G	146- J	147- O	148- H	149- Q	150- A	151- U	152- Y	153- E	■	154- R
155- E	156- V	157- F	158- Y	159- G	■	160- D	161- M	162- P	■	163- E	164- R	165- A	166- F	167- O	168- G	169- V
■	170- Y	171- S	172- W	■	173- A	174- B	175- S	176- D	■	177- U	178- E	179- I	180- A	■	■	■

DIRECTIONS

To solve this puzzle you must guess twenty-five words, the definitions of which are given in the column headed DEFINITIONS. The letters in each word to be guessed are numbered. These numbers appear under the dashes in the column headed WORDS. There is a dash for each letter in the required word. The key letters in the squares are for convenience, indicating to which word in the definitions each letter in the diagram belongs. When you have guessed a word, fill it in on the dashes; then write each letter in the correspondingly numbered square on the puzzle diagram. When the squares are all filled in you will find (by reading from left to right) a quotation from a famous author. Reading up and down the letters mean nothing. The black squares indicate ends of words; therefore words do not necessarily end at the right side of the diagram.

When the column headed WORDS is filled in, the initial letters spell the name of the author and the title of the piece from which the quotation has been taken. Authority for spelling and definitions is Webster's New International Dictionary (1938 edition).

The solution of last week's *Double Crostic* will be found on page 6 of this issue.

DEFINITIONS

A. Voluntary, spontaneous.

B. Medical.

C. Hero of unfinished novel by Dickens.

D. German historian (1856-1915).

E. Descending from a source or head.

F. Ancient name of Spanish peninsula.

G. One's own interest or welfare (2 wds.; colloq.)

H. Variety of newmarket (cards).

I. Habitual, constitutional.

J. Languages peculiar to certain groups.

K. Chinese name for the Supreme Deity (used in ancient classics; comp).

L. Behavior resulting from sensitive perception.

M. Designating style of song or tune of high pitch (Anc. Gr. music).

N. Struggle, fight.

O. Rabbinic seminary.

P. Bobolink (U. S.); European bunting.

Q. Right to act in one's own responsibility (2 wds.)

R. Ponderous volume.

S. Pertaining to time or act of rising; eastern.

T. Hebrew prophet, 8th Century B. C. (Old Test.)

U. Wife of Jehoida (Bib. longer spelling).

V. Excessively difficult.

W. Long close-fitting coat or cloak.

X. Exclamation expressing exhilaration.

Y. Having little or no money or backing (U.S. slang).

WORDS

173	14	59	76	20	150	180	165					
54	106	132	174	41	125							
64	108	47	130	11	79	143	138	115	52			
95	69	176	137	42	26	160	2	97				
163	155	13	7	92	178	83	153					
166	45	157	58	142	99							
100	145	122	113	34	63	46	159	168				
128	28	36	123	49	116	148	23	40				
81	43	141	38	179	72							
15	29	9	84	146								
35	25	80	135	117	37	121						
16	6	48	32									
101	114	55	39	33	161	107						
18	112	44	50	8	61							
77	62	147	56	21	167	134						
89	94	119	139	51	110	162						
85	149	10	17	68	127	74	96					
1	73	154	164									
175	140	102	171	70	91							
88	27	144	65	103								
177	82	133	93	66	120	129	151	78	60	22	118	
3	75	30	105	109	124	169	156					
90	71	53	172	136	86	126	5	12				
104	111	98	67									
19	170	87	152	4	24	158	31	131	57			

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LITTLE, BROWN

TRADE WINDS

ONE of the fascinating periodicals that reaches our desk from time to time is the "Weekly List of Selected United States Government Publications." Issued by the Superintendent of Documents, the list reveals an astonishing diversity of subjects your government writes about. We have before us the latest list, which offers a generous range of selection; from "Avocado Diseases in Florida" to "Radioactive Luminous Compound." But if these two fields are somewhat foreign to the interests of some readers, they may be able to find something to their tastes in the material on mushroom culture, or on "Nuts"—which deal with investigations on the storage of these fruits. What appears to be one of the more popular publications is "Family Food Consumption and Dietary Levels." This sells for $.35 per copy.

★ ★

☞Of the hundreds of children's books that will soon pour into the bookstores during Book Week, November 2-8, one of the most interesting is Babette Deutsch's "Walt Whitman—Builder for America." This book is the winner of the Julia Ellsworth Ford Foundation Award, and though it is biographical in concept, it deals in a much broader sense with Whitman's influence in democratic history and thought. Half the book contains selections from the poems of the poet arranged so as to present his own life-story. This method of presentation is particularly effective for classroom reading.

★ ★

☞A non-fiction book on the Alliance Fall list will be a biography of Franz von Papen, "Satan in Top Hat," by Tibor Koeves. Since much attention these days is centered on Turkey and Iran, the book should be a welcome addition on the growing list of men who are diplomatically involved with the fate of our civilization.

★ ★

☞Old Quercus, spending his caducity in a long vacation, says: "Has the government called in the aluminum cases of the Rockwell Kent 'Moby Dick?'"

★ ★

☞The outdoor stalls of bookstores are an ever-fascinating hunting ground for booklovers. And an intriguing title that reached the eyes of this observer at Wynn & Horn's in Peekskill, New York, was "Rainy Days in a Library," by Sir Herbert Maxwell, Bart. It is a slight book and one ideally suited for reading when the rains beat a tattoo on a country roof or on the broad leaves of an oak. Sir Herbert Maxwell chose the title in its most believable fashion by simply finding himself stranded in the library of some friends when the rains fell, postponing a projected hunting trip.

★ ★

☞The theory of reading enjoyment for the Englishman was a simple one. One merely picks a book at random, seats oneself in a comfortable chair, and with anticipated delight plunges in. Sir Herbert found much pleasure in all his selections. The first was Adam Petrie's "Rules of Good Deportment, or of Good Breeding, for the Use of Youth," Edinburgh, printed in the year MDCCXX. In turning its pages he found, much to his amusement, the following rule of deportment:

> If a young Man and Woman be in a Room, and you be to remove from them, and if there be none with them, it is imprudent and uncivil to shut the Door after You, for if a Person of a narrow Soul shall come and find them shut up in a Room, they may be ready to stain their Reputation.

★ ★

☞This of course is almost in complete agreement with some rules of "deportment" which some of our hotels insist on today.

★ ★

☞From there on Sir Herbert voices his comments on Count Baldassare Castiglione's "Il Cortegiano: 'The Sporting Magazine;' or, Monthly Calendar of Transactions of the Turf, the Chase, and every other Diversion Interesting to the Man of Pleasure and Enterprise;" and several others including Robert Pitcairn's "Criminal Trials in Scotland from A.D. 1488 to 1624," Edinburgh, 1833.

★ ★

☞The leisurely and rambling remarks and observations of Sir Herbert open several interesting fields of reading for all of us. Instead of having our minds set on acquiring the latest and most popular book of the day, let us go to our library, choose several books at random, and await the verdict of mind and spirit.

★ ★

☞A new edition of "War and Peace" will soon be published by Simon & Schuster. It will contain a number of features, including "parallel maps" and book markers, illuminating the historical background. It will also include tributes to the book as "the greatest novel of all time" from outstanding authors of our own day and the leading critics and novelists of the last fifty years.

LOUIS GREENFIELD.

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